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***HANDLING OF CONGRESSIONAL, HIGH OFFICIAL AND RESIDENT INQUIRIES***

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**NOTICE:** This publication is available at: <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/directives/>.

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***SUMMARY OF REVISIONS:*** This supplement supersedes ROML C-39-96, Subject: Handling of Congressional, High Official and Resident Inquiries, dated November 29, 1996, filed with WSOM Chapter A-10, which is operationally obsolete.

(Signed by Gary S. Foltz)

June 28, 2005

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Gary S. Foltz

Date

Acting Director, Central Region

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1. Introduction. It has always been National Weather Service (NWS) policy to give Congressional and other high-level government inquiries top priority and quick response. This policy is strongly endorsed by the Department of Commerce and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

In the Central Region, the management of all Congressional and other high-level government (i.e., gubernatorial) inquiries and responses rests with the Deputy Director (W/CRx1). In the absence of the Deputy Director, these inquiries will be routed to the Services Division Chief.

Inquiries from local residents and local government officials may be answered by local managers with notice of the inquiry and response provided to the Deputy Director. With sensitive matters, the reply should be coordinated with the appropriate Meteorologist in Charge (MIC) or designee, appropriate Hydrologist in Charge (HIC) or designee, and Central Region Headquarters (CRH) before release. In certain situations involving sensitive matters, reply will be made by CRH or Weather Service Headquarters (WSH).

Whenever a response to a Congressional or high-level agency is expected to take more than three (3) working days from the time the letter, telegram, phone call, etc., is received, the addressed field office or CRH personnel will acknowledge, in writing, receipt of the inquiry and explain that it is being referred to or handled by WSH.

Inquiries from local residents, lower-level government agencies, and local private agencies should be answered within ten (10) workdays of receipt. If more time is needed to prepare a complete answer, an interim reply will be made.

Listed below are the required actions on various levels of inquiries received at all offices in the Central Region.

2. Congressional and Other High-Level Federal and State Agencies. All letters from

Congressional and other high-level Federal and state officials (e.g., cabinet members and governors) received by field offices must be referred within one (1) working day to CRH, Attention: Deputy Director, W/CRx1. These inquiries will then be referred to WSH Management and Organization Division (W/CFO3) for coordination of reply by WSH. In most instances, WSH will ultimately answer the correspondence, and CRH may send an interim reply acknowledging receipt and advising of referral to NWSH. When local or regional issues are involved, draft response will be provided to WSH.

3. NWS Office Visits by Members of Congress. On occasion during breaks in Congressional sessions, members of Congress may visit NWS offices within their states or districts, with some of these visits being unannounced. Personal visits or phone calls by members of Congress or Congressional staffers must be reported immediately by telephone call to W/CRx1, followed by an e-mail message to the Deputy Director with a "cc" to CRH Public Affairs Officer.

4. Local or Lower-Level State Agencies. Letters from local or lower-level state agencies may be answered by the individual addressed, after coordination with CRH and the appropriate MIC/HIC/Designee. When responding to a state official, the responsible manager should ensure coordination with other managers serving the state. There may be instances where these inquiries will be referred to higher levels for response, especially in issues of national or regional significance.

5. Residents Concerned About Local Issues. Letters from local residents concerning local issues may be answered by the individual addressed after review by the MIC. If the issue is of regional or national concern, the response should be coordinated with CRH and the MIC. Copies of all inquiries and responses should be provided to CRH as quickly as possible.

6. Field Office Telephone Inquiries. Answer questions using established information and policies. If unsure of the answer, say so and offer to return the call as soon as you have the requested information becomes available.

If the subject of the conversation is controversial, or potentially controversial, immediately call CRH and report the results of the conversation to the Deputy Director. This should be followed by an e-mail message to the Deputy Director with a "cc" to the CRH Public Affairs Officer.

7. Field Office Email Inquiries. Answer questions using locally established information and policies. If unsure of the answer, email the requesting party stating you are researching the request and will respond within 5 business days.

If the subject of the email is controversial, or potentially controversial, forward the email to the MIC/HIC/designee for a response. In most cases, the manager can craft a response, but if the manager deems appropriate she/he will immediately forward the email to the CR Deputy Director, with a "cc" to the CR Public Affairs Officer. These three parties will draft a coordinated response to be sent by either the field or the regional office.

If the issue is of regional or national concern, the email request should be forwarded to the CR Deputy Director with "cc" to the CR Public Affairs Officer for an appropriate response. In all cases the requesting party will receive a status of their requests within five days business days.